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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 PARIS 001361

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DOJ FOR BRUCE SWARTZ; TREASURY FOR JUSTIN SERAFINI; NCTC  
FOR MITHAIS PEREZ; ANKARA FOR ANDREW SNOW AND SUZANNE  
HAYDEN; COPENHAGEN FOR ANDREW SULLIVAN

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [EFIN](#) [KCRM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#) [GM](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: A/S C/T COORDINATOR TALKS PKK TO THE FRENCH

REF: A. 2006 STATE 35685

[1](#)B. 2006 PARIS 1487

[1](#)C. 2006 PARIS 1893

Classified By: A/POLITICAL COUNSELOR BRUCE TURNER FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) a  
nd (d)

[1](#)1. (S) SUMMARY: Acting S C/T Coordinator Frank Urbancic and a  
U.S. interagency delegation met March 29 with a French  
interministerial group to discuss strategies for dismantling  
the capabilities of the PKK to finance and recruit in Europe.

The French delegation provided a comprehensive overview of  
their understanding of PKK operations in France, and detailed  
the GOF,s current approach to curbing the organization,s  
local illegal activities, including the recent arrests of PKK  
leaders in France. GOF officials agreed on the importance of  
engaging with other EU partners to tackle the transnational  
nature of the problem, and were particularly receptive to a  
U.S. request for France to undertake dialogue with Denmark on  
the issue. Urbancic met separately with Ministry of Justice  
officials to emphasize the importance of international  
judicial cooperation and sharing of information. French  
prosecutors will be going to Turkey on April 16 to continue  
consultations with their Turkish counterparts. The U.S.  
delegation was later received by the resident Turkish  
Ambassador who expressed gratitude for the U.S. role in  
calling attention to the problem in Europe.

[1](#)2. (S) SUMMARY CONTINUED: Urbancic also raised U.S. concerns  
about Hezbollah,s rearming in Lebanon. French officials  
acknowledged the likelihood that Hezbollah was rearming but  
doubted that the organization posed a current threat to  
UNIFIL. Western interests, they said, faced a greater threat  
from jihadists north of the Litani River. END SUMMARY

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PKK IN EUROPE INITIATIVE  
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[1](#)3. (S) Acting S C/T Coordinator Frank Urbancic and a U.S.  
interagency delegation met March 29 with a French  
interministerial group led by SGDN,s (General Secretariat  
for National Defense in the PM,s office) Chief of

Intelligence Coordination, General Salvignol, to discuss strategies for dismantling the capabilities of the PKK to finance and recruit in Europe. Urbancic explained the U.S. initiative to call attention to the transnational nature of the problem and encourage European countries to investigate the illegal, cross-border activities of the PKK. The S C/T Acting Coordinator welcomed the recent arrests of 16 PKK members in France, and noted the crippling effect such action has on the organization's ability to "collect" and transfer funds that we know eventually end up in the hands of terrorists in northern Iraq.

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PKK IN FRANCE  
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¶4. (S) Pierre Cruciani, the French DST (FBI-Equivalent) expert on the PKK, gave a comprehensive analysis of the PKK's suspected activities in Europe. He noted that with approximately 100,000 Kurds in France, there was a sizable population for extremists to target for collection and recruitment. The PKK, operating under various names and entities, uses several tactics to collect its funds, including extortion, intimidation, money laundering, and drug trafficking. Cruciani added that the group also uses propaganda and "cultural" gatherings to promote its "cause." Many of the organization's leaders are known to the DST, and local political gatherings are monitored. French interests have never been directly targeted by PKK terrorists.

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SDAT,S ARREST OPERATION  
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¶5. (S) Fabrice Gardon, the Chief of the National Department for Combating International Terrorism (DNRTI) inside the Ministry of Interior's Judicial Police Bureau, briefed on the status of the state's investigation against 16 PKK members arrested in France and Belgium in February 2007. He confirmed many publicly known details about the case, and explained that the case was linked to the July 2006 arrests of two PKK members in Paris who were attempting to exchange 200,000 Euros into U.S. dollars. The bills are now known to have come from the Netherlands and had traces of heroin. French judicial authorities issued arrest warrants after the investigation led them to uncover a network of PKK members linked to the initial arrestees. While all but the initial two arrestees have been provisionally released, Gardon insisted that prosecutors intended to bring the case to trial. Urbancic stressed to Gardon that the extensive nature of the PKK's illegal activities and urged GOF officials to work with their European partners to uncover the true breadth of the PKK's cross-border operations.

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FOLLOWING THE MONEY  
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¶6. (S) Olivier Salvador, from the Ministry of Finance's counterterrorism office, explained that while the PKK was inscribed in the EU's terrorists list, French authorities and private banks had difficulty identifying targets for asset freezing, as no one used the "PKK" as an official name when making transactions. When pressed about the possibility of freezing assets of those known to belong to the PKK, Salvador appeared somewhat uninformed on the process. He pointed to the DST when discussing cash couriers (money being transferred outside of France in cash) as they had jurisdiction for following such activities. (COMMENT: Salvador has only been at the Ministry of Finance for three weeks. Unfortunately, there was not time for DST's Cruciani to comment during the meeting; post will follow-up further with both Finance and DST. END COMMENT)

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INTEL SHARING  
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¶17. (S) Urbancic urged French authorities to work with their European counterparts and the Turks to further their investigation. Salvignol said the French were already working with several countries, including Turkey, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands, but would continue to expand their cooperation and welcomed U.S. assistance on the case. Salvignol also expressed appreciation for several pieces of intelligence provided by Urbancic at the meeting's conclusion.

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COPENHAGEN  
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¶18. (S) After explaining that the U.S. delegation had just arrived from Copenhagen, Urbancic asked French authorities if they would be willing to consider working with Danish officials to uncover the extent to which illegal money was being used to fund ROJ TV. ROJ TV, he explained, was produced in Belgium and broadcast from Denmark, but received its orders directly from PKK leaders in Northern Iraq who used the station as a propaganda tool. Salvignol agreed to coordinate further with Danish authorities.

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HEZBOLLAH  
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¶19. (S) Urbancic raised U.S. concerns on the rearmament of Hezbollah. French MFA DAS-equivalent for Security, Pierre Thenard, explained that while GOF authorities did not rule out the possibility that Hezbollah was rearming, they did not

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believe that Hezbollah currently posed a threat to UNIFIL. Any moves by UNIFIL that crossed Hezbollah's "red lines" would in fact only serve to make UNIFIL troops a Hezbollah target, he said. Thenard stressed, however, that the flow of funds and arms from Syria to Lebanon was worrisome, and he said that France was exploring possibilities for effective monitoring. The extent to which Hezbollah was controlled by Iran was unclear, but he noted that the GOF remained concerned about the threat Hezbollah poses for regional stability, particularly in the tri-border region of South Lebanon. France, Thenard said, was not blocking Hezbollah's inscription into the EU terrorist list.

¶10. The greater concern for Western interests in Lebanon, Thenard stressed, was north of the Litani River. Palestinian Salafist jihadists, he insisted, were clearly interested in Western targets in Lebanon, and more attention was needed to curb their growing influence in the country.

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PARTICIPANTS  
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¶11. (SBU) French key participants were: General Salvignol, SGDN Director for Intelligence Coordination, General Clermont; SGDN Deputy Director for International and Strategic Affairs; Pierre Thenard, MFA DAS-equivalent for Security; Pierre Cruciani, DST PKK Chief; Farbice Gardon, Chief of the National Department for Combating International Terrorism; and Olivier Salvador, Counterterrorism Officer, Ministry of Finance

¶12. (SBU) The U.S. was represented by: S/CT Acting Coordinator Frank Urbancic, EUR/SE Deputy Director Baxter Hunt, NCTC counterterrorism analyst Mathias Perez, and Treasury terrorism finance policy advisor Justin Serafini

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MINISTRY OF JUSTICE  
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¶13. (S) The U.S. delegation met separately on March 29 with Ministry of Justice officials. Jean-Marie Huet, the MOJ,s Director for Criminal Affairs and Pardons, told Urbancic that the French judiciary was committed to working with its EU partners on a coordinated judicial strategy that would strengthen the EU,s ability to prosecute terrorists. While Huet explained that the PKK had never posed a direct threat to French interests, except through minor attacks on the local Turkish Embassy, there had been an evolution of the organization such that it now posed a more serious criminal threat. France, he said, would continue to discuss the issue with the Turks, Germans and the Belgians, and would welcome dialogue with the Danes. Judicial authorities, including prosecutors, he explained, would be traveling to Turkey on April 16 to work with their counterparts on the current case against 16 PKK members arrested in France and Belgium. Huet said that France was grateful for any evidence the U.S. could provide in the case, and noted that judicial cooperation with the U.S. remained excellent.

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TURKISH AMBASSADOR  
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¶14. (S) Turkish Ambassador to France, Osman Taney Koruturk, received the U.S. delegation on the afternoon of March 29, following U.S. meetings with the GOF. Koruturk, who was previously Turkey,s Special Envoy for Northern Iraq issues, thanked the U.S. delegation for taking such a keen interest in the PKK,s European activities and was pleased to hear news of the GOF,s positive reaction to the visit. He agreed that the recent arrests in France were helpful, though he was clearly not convinced of France,s commitment to prosecute. He did note, however, that French prosecutors appeared interested in the case and were having good exchanges with

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their Turkish counterparts.

¶15. (S) Koruturk said that if France could expose the illegal activities of the PKK and put shame on the organization, the PKK would lose a great deal of support from an already reluctant local Kurdish population. This had been the case in Germany many years ago, he asserted. Koruturk noted that in addition to the current high-profile case against PKK members, other investigations were underway. Kidnapping of minors, either for ransom or for recruitment, was a common PKK tactic, and some parents were now ready to take such cases to police. One such case was already in the French courts, he said. He agreed to share more information on the case and stay in contact with our Embassy as it moved forward.

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COMMENT  
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¶16. (S) COMMENT: GOF officials, across the board, appeared prepared to engage on the PKK problem in France in ways and to a degree to which they had not before. While it was evident that cross-border cooperation was still not a priority, the French did not seem opposed to the idea and welcomed the U.S. initiative. Police seem intent on continuing their investigation into the PKK, with good support from the judiciary and open channels to the Turks. They were very appreciative of U.S. intelligence and agreed to keep U.S. authorities informed of the case,s status. END COMMENT

¶17. This cable has been cleared by S/CT and EUR/SE.

